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AN
INQUIRY
INTO THE
NATURE, and GENUINE LAWS
OF
POETRY;

INCLUDING

A particular DEFENCE of the WRITINGS, and
GENIUS of Mr. POPE.

BY

PERCIVAL STOCKDALE.

— On fait qu'il n'est point de Vérité isolée; que toute Idée nouvelle tient à quelques Idées déjà connues, avec lesquelles elle a, nécessairement, quelques Ressemblances. C'est, cependant, de ces Ressemblances que part l'Envie, pour accuser journellement de plagiat les Hommes illustres, nos contemporains.

Helvetius. De L'Esprit.

L O N D O N,
Printed for N. CONANT, No. 64, Fleet-street.

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Gift of
Hon. Dr. Harris.

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T O

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
LORD GEORGE GERMAINE.

MY LORD,

MY veneration of the memory of a great Poet, and my high opinion of your literary talents, and acquirements, have prevailed with me to take the liberty of dedicating
a 2 the

the following Essay to your Lordship. The entertaining, instructive, and sublime Genius, whose works are the principal subject of these pages ;—who is admired by Europe, at least as much as any modern Poet, was well known, and properly esteemed by the late Duke of Dorset, your worthy Father. Your ancestors, my Lord, have, much to their honour, been long famous for a particular attention to poetical merit. Therefore to this humble, but ingenuous tribute, from the Authour
of

of a Defence of the Writings, and Genius of Mr. Pope, you have a Title both personal, and prescriptive.

These are the motives which dictated this Address to your Lordship:—not my gratitude, as an Englishman, for the progress, or rather continuation, of our unconstitutional, sanguinary and destructive continental war, over which *you* preside; not very auspiciously to your political reputation.—I pay this homage to the polite scholar, and to the orator;—not a particle

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ticle of my respect is intended
for the Minister.

I am, MY LORD,

your Lordship's

most obedient,

humble Servant,

PERCIVAL STOCKDALE.

Lleweny,
Oct. 10, 1777.

A N

AN
INQUIRY
INTO THE
NATURE and GENUINE LAWS
OF
POETRY.

WHILE I passed some weeks of
the last summer with a friend
in the country, I read, in his library, a
Book entitled, *An Essay on the Writ-
ings, and Genius of Pope*. It's Au-
thour, whose taste is vitiated, and
whose head is confused with too much
B learning,

learning, treats our celebrated poet with great irreverence, and injustice. In reading that book, I was not seduced by poetical sophistry, nor by an ostentatious display of erudition. After I had perused it, I thought for myself on the subject; and some observations on Poetry, which then arose in my mind, I now offer to the publick; not in the peremptory tone of an Aristotelian critick, but with the deference of a gentleman.

It is somewhat surprizing, that, in an age of taste, and refinement, your men of mere erudition, your mechanical critics, have presumed to publish their illiberal, and stupid
 remarks

remarks on this great and beautiful poet. That the systems of Newton and Locke are, already, in many parts, disputed, opposed, and rejected, are not extraordinary changes in the republick of knowledge ; because the abilities of those great men were exerted on objects which will ever be controvertible ; on the primary laws of matter, and of mind, which act in the remote and deep recesses of nature. But that Pope should be attacked openly, and in form, by envy, or by those who assume consequence from mere learning and singularity, after his glory had been thoroughly established by

the admiration of his countrymen, and before luxury, and venality had ushered into England another age of barbarism, are circumstances rather new, and capricious, in the post-humous fate of an illustrious poet. One would have thought that *his* fame would have been permanent, and sacred; for he acquired it not by metaphysical subtleties, nor by deducing certain consequences from uncertain principles; but by addressing the common sense, the common perceptions, the common feelings; the strong, and the noble sentiments of mankind. Dr. Warton entitles his Book, “ An Essay
“ on

“on the Genius and Writings of
 “Pope:”—a preposterous title which
 corresponds with the absurdity of the
 whole performance. For the ge-
 nius of an Authour is discovered by
 his writings; the character of his
 writings is not inferred from his ge-
 nius. Among his other scholastick
 dreams, he asserts, that to estimate
 the merit of any poet, we must di-
 vest his thoughts of measure, and
 rhyme, and read and weigh them in
 a prosaic order; an assertion that
 shows how little He is acquainted with
 Poetry, either in judgement, or senti-
 ment. True, and complete poetical
 excellence results, not only from ex-

tenfive knowledge, and from a senti-
 mental, vigorous, and ardent mind;
 but likewise from a delicate sagacity,
 and accuracy; or, in other words,
 from taste, and elegance. Dr.
 Warton ought to have considered,
 that Poetry is *one*, and, by a long
 interval, *the first* of the fine arts;
 and therefore, that the fire of the
 poet, if he would reach his aim,
 if he would strike irresistably, and
 with all his force, must be model-
 led, and directed by deliberation,
 and choice. Hence, while He is
 heated with the warmth of inspiration,
 he is attentive to propriety, to order,
 and embellishment; not only to the
 most

most pertinent selection of words, but likewise to their position ; to the strength, and harmony which are produced by their judicious, and fortunate arrangement. For these are indisputable and powerful constituents of Poetry. A particle may be so placed in a verse, that the sense of the Authour may be clear, and the idiom of our language may not be violated ; yet even that particle, by a happy transposition, might acquire life, and energy, and give more animation, and lustre to the line. In the productions of the fine arts, nothing is indifferent ; the minutest parts have their great importance

and influence ; they reflect proportion, and expression on the other parts, from which *they* likewise draw those advantages ; and all the parts, as they are disposed, and compacted by the artist, form a striking whole. It is one of Dr. Warton's few just observations, that the late Dr. Hawkesworth, hath, in many papers of his *Adventurer*, shown a strong, and bright imagination, and invention ; two essential poetical characteristics ; and yet that he was but an indifferent poet. This observation should have checked his mangling of our admired poet ; it should have been a hint for him to find

find that a certain series, a certain rise, and flow of ideas, and language; that composition, symmetry, and harmony are parts of Poetry as well as thought and sentiment; and that, vigorous, and transporting are the effects of

— magic numbers, and persuasive sound.

It is immutably in the nature of Poetry, through the ear to captivate the soul. If I am told that this airy property does it no great honour, I answer, that it hath pleased the Authour of our Being, that we should be very strongly, and very nobly moved by sound; that all the various, and rapturous emotions

tions which we receive from music are totally impressed by sound ; and that musick is a fine, a sublime art ; though far inferiour to Poetry, in extent, in dignity, and in power.

I may now venture to assert, that if we deem Poetry, dissolved, and emasculated into prose, a criterion of poetical merit, we may as well mutilate the statue of a Phidias, and throw its fragments promiscuously around us, that we may be struck with the beauty of the work, and form a right judgement of the excellence of the artist. Or, to feel the musick of one of Handel's Oratorios, and thence to estimate *his* genius,

we

we may as well play all its notes, but not in *his* order, and combination.

“ Take” [says Dr. Warton, in the ninth page of his Dedication] “ ten
 “ lines of the Iliad, Paradise Lost, or
 “ even of the Georgics of Virgil, and
 “ see whether by any process of critical chymistry, you can lower, and
 “ reduce them to the tameness of
 “ prose. You will find that they will
 “ appear like Ulysses in his Disguise
 “ of Rags; still a Hero, though
 “ lodged in the cottage of the Herdsman Eumæus.” This period is concluded with a pretty simile; but when we reason, and exemplify, we should carefully distinguish between
 simile,

simile, and fact. I shall here try Homer, and Milton by the poetical criterion which, with his usual precipitance, he has adopted from Horace, and with which he seems to triumph over the admirers of Pope. Were I disposed to quote disingenuously; were I disposed to accept this challenge in all it's latitude; I could give several passages from each of those great poets, in a prosaic order, by which, they would be so far from appearing heroes in disguise, that we should take them for mere gossips, or drivellers. But the cause which I am pleading is too strongly founded in nature to need
the

the mean support of illiberal advantage, and chicane. I shall cite the opening of the Iliad, and of the Paradise Lost, without looking farther at present into either poet. As I am not so fond of Greek parade as my learned academician, I shall translate the ten first lines of the Iliad into English; the translation shall be faithful, and worthy of the original; allowance being made for the superior energy of the Greek language, and for the unnatural, and monstrous transformation of Poetry into prose.

“ O Goddess, sing the destructive
 “ animosity of Achilles, the son of
 “ Peleus, which brought infinite
 “ woes

“ woes on the Greeks ; and sent
 “ many brave souls of heroes pre-
 “ maturely to Pluto ; and made them
 “ a prey to dogs, and all ravenous
 “ birds (But the will of Jove was
 “ fulfilled) from the time of the im-
 “ placable quarrel between Atrides,
 “ the King of Men, and the divine
 “ Achilles. And from whom of the
 “ Gods came the rise of their dispute ?
 “ From the son of Jove and Latona :
 “ for he, provoked against the King,
 “ spread a fatal pestilence through
 “ the army ; and the people fell.”

I have here given the sense of
 Homer with sufficient accuracy ; nor
 are my expressions tame, and life-
 less ;

less ; the passage is not flat as I have disposed it ; but surely the pleasure it affords is far inferiour to poetical emotion. If I am told that a poet loses considerably by a translation, I answer that the observation generally holds true ; that these lines of Homer are weakened in my version ; not merely by being translated, nor from the inability of the English language to equal the energy of the Greek ; but because in the state to which they are, in that version, reduced, they are, in truth, not Poetry : they want the charms of Mr. Pope's translation ; they want his generous flow, which gains impulse, and fire in every line
of

of it's progress, and bears along, the mind of the reader, in a course almost as accelerated, and pleasurable as it's Authour's ; they want his glowing diction, his characteristick epithets, and images, which correspond with the genius, and ideas of Homer, and by which his genius and ideas are often invigorated, and beautified ; they want his harmony of numbers, his spontaneous, pertinent, and forcible rhyme ; for it must ever be my opinion (Dr. Warton will think me a man of a monkish taste) that rhyme, whether it took it's origin from the college, or the convent, in the perfection to which it

it was brought by this inimitable bard, whom He so weakly censures, and attempts to degrade, is a great improvement, and ornament to English Poetry.

Let the learned reader break the measure of the beginning of the Iliad in the Greek original; let him give the words different stations from those they hold in Homer; let him read the lines in their primitive order, and in his transposition, and compare the effects of each on his ear, and on his mind. Unless Melpomene has frowned on his birth, he will feel the one Poetry, and he will find the other Prose: he will

C

feel

feel more sensibly by the comparison, the influence of Homer's arrangement; of poetical enunciation.

I shall now make my second experiment of Horace's, and Dr. Warton's criterion of true Poetry, by transposing the metrical order of the ten first lines of the *Paradise Lost*.

“ Heavenly muse ! that didst in-
 “ spire, on the sacred top of Oreb or
 “ Sinai, that shepherd who first
 “ taught the chosen seed, how the
 “ Heavens, and Earth, in the begin-
 “ ning, rose out of Chaos ; sing of
 “ the first disobedience of man, and
 “ the fruit of that forbidden tree,
 “ whose mortal taste brought, with
 “ the

“ the loss of Eden, death into the
 “ world, and all our woe ; till one
 “ greater man restore us, and regain
 “ the blissful seat.”

The idiom of our language hath not suffered me to distort some parts of this quotation from their measure : yet whether or no the force, and beauty which it received from the master of our epic strain are not almost totally lost in the form it now bears, I appeal, not to your mere scholars, your *Helluones Librorum*, who read Milton and Suetonius with equal composure ; and retain the substance of whatever they read by dint of universal memory ;—nor to

your whimsical, formal, and inflexible criticks; but to those on whose imaginations the complete style of the muse is warmly impressed, by the structure, and spirit of Poetry, and by the susceptibility of their own minds.

It may be objected to my application of these two passages from Homer, and Milton, that I have not fairly exemplified Horace's, and our Authour's poetical test; as the exordium of a judicious epic poet is always marked with simplicity. To this objection I reply, that I thought, the most ingenuous way to try this imaginary proof of true genius, was,
 not

not to make a selection, but to take a few lines from each poet, as they first occurred; that the lines which I have quoted, though they are not eminently nervous, and sublime, yet as they are invocations to the muse of the heathen, and christian poet, are adorned with luminous imagery; and that this objection cannot equitably be made by Dr. Warton: for my examples have more of the poetical tone, and complexion than the specimen which he hath produced from the beginning of Mr. Pope's first Ethick Epistle; where metaphorical, and splendid verse is incompatible with his objects; which

allow him not to rise above the mere moralist, and the man of the world.

Timidity, and inconsistency are the general concomitants of every kind of guilt. Dr. Warton was intended by nature for a diligent, and reputable schoolmaster, or for a faithful warden of a College; not for a poet, nor for a liberal, and spirited critick. His moderate abilities have been perverted by promiscuous, and intemperate reading, by an undistinguishing, and servile admiration of the Ancients, and by an ignoble, and inordinate ambition of singularity, and extraordinary penetration. Bewildered in this literary

rary labyrinth, and intoxicated with this unhappy passion, he rashly determines to blight the laurels of Pope, to humble exalted genius ; to deaden universal fame ; to correct the voice of nature. Yet He maintains the ungenerous contest with the incongruity, and self-contradiction of one who deduces false inferences from false principles, and with the mental reservation, and pusillanimity of one who feels that he is urging a wrong cause, and insulting illustrious merit. The dignity, and irresistible powers of our immortal poet often draw from him involuntary deference, and extorted applause.

plause. Will the reformer of our English taste vouchsafe to answer me one question? If Mr. Pope had been living when you blundered on your opinion of his Poetry, would you have dared to treat him with that freedom with which you have arraigned his departed genius? If you deign me an answer, and one that is true, you will answer me in the negative. If you had attacked his fame while it was in his power to inflict a proper punishment on offenders of *your* class, he would probably have gibbeted you in a couplet executive of poetical justice, where you would have swung, with
the

the rest of your Bœotian fraternity, in adamantine chains. If my question brings you to a full sense of your demerit, you will make a recantation of your critical treason, not to me, but to an enlightened publick, who admire, and venerate his memory; and you will never again write, nor speak disrespectfully of one of our first poets, to whom you would have crouched, if he had been alive, and whose acquaintance, at least from your literary vanity, and fear, you would have pronounced your greatest honour.

I like not to express myself in a manner very familiar to the writer
whom

whom I am refuting; in flaming hyperbole, and rapture; though that indefinite, and extravagant species of condemnation, or eulogy, saves one the trouble of accurate thought, and distinction, and dazzles the unreflecting reader. But I believe I may, without presumption, insist, that if the trial of poetical excellence, recommended by Horace, and by Warton, was, in the eye of the true critick, a legal trial; the poet never existed who would suffer less by encountering this frozen ordeal than Pope. But why did not our severe judge bring him to the bar of this rigid sentence, in all his vigour?

why

why did he not give him a chance for his life? His arbitrary process would have had, at least, the appearance of equity, if He had tried its effect on one of the many admirable passages which he has quoted in his book, and which demonstrate the futility of its whole tenour, instead of dragging to his Horatian rack the beginning of the epistle above-mentioned, in which the great exertion of our poet would have been incompatible with his subject, and in which He sports in the easy style of epistolary familiarity. The pertinacious critick, to evince the mediocrity of Pope's Poetry; to reach
his

his hostile aim; to stab the poet in a vital part, should have tried his experiment on a capital quotation. Many such quotations He hath given us from the Rape of the Lock, which are completely beautiful; and many from the Eloïsa to Abelard, which are superlatively great. If our priest, for instance, had condemned such lines, to his barbarous purgatory, from the latter Poem, as those in which Eloïsa paints, in the strongest colours, the objects around her convent; and describes, with almost unexampled animation, their effects on her mind, when her piety was absorbed in her passion; I make

no

no doubt but a discerning reader, if he had not been informed of the metamorphosis, would have thought it the sentiments, and language of one endowed with a vigorous imagination. But in those lines, thus transposed, the *poet* would not have been discovered; for they would have wanted the indispensable characteristics of Poetry; they would have been spoiled of its beautiful symmetry; of its captivating graces; of its harmonious expression. If He had exhibited such a specimen, he would not have been less absurd; but He would have been more ingenuous: and if his postulatum was

founded

founded in truth, He would have unquestionably proved that Mr. Pope was not a poet. I shall here transcribe the lines to which I have now alluded; not as they might have been shortened, and stretched, dislocated, and mutilated, by our literary Procrustes; but in their own *form, and pressure*. Many such testimonies I could produce to warrant my zeal for Pope.

The darksome pines that o'er yon rocks reclined,

Wave high, and murmur to the hollow wind;

The wandering streams that shine between the hills;

The grotts that echo to the tinkling rills;

The

The dying gales that pant upon the trees,
 The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze;
 No more these scenes my meditation aid,
 Or lull to rest the visionary maid.
 But o'er the twilight groves, and dusky
 caves,
 Long-sounding iles, and intermingled
 graves,
 Black MELANCHOLY sits, and round her
 throws
 A death-like silence, and a dread repose:
 Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene;
 Shades every flower, and darkens every
 green;
 Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,
 And breathes a browner horror on the
 woods.

Eloïsa to Abelard, v. 154.

The active imagination of the
 susceptible reader, on whom Pope's
 Epistle

Epistle from Eloïsa to Abelard hath had its full play, has precluded a minute encomium on this admirable quotation: it must have called forth all his sensibility to nature, to sympathy, and to love.

Dr. Warton seems to expect that a poet should be always highly poetical; an expectation, in which, if his judgement, and taste were sound, he would be as often disappointed by Homer, and Milton as by any other poets. The genius of the poet cannot always; it ought not always to be kept on the stretch; especially in a work of any length. He should not continually be regaling

us with rich description, inflaming us with moral ardour; thrilling us with the pathetick, or transporting us with the sublime. Ardour and strength should, indeed, be the predominant characters of his Poem; but it should sometimes flow in a gentle, and a placid strain: it will be enough if He sometimes preserves only his *lucid order*. The descent of the Muse is absolutely necessary, if we consider the nature of the poet, and the nature of his readers; and if it was not necessary, it would be judicious. It is demanded by the flexures, and variety of a fertile subject; it gives a natural, and easy

D

air

air to her Poetry ; it prevents us from being cloyed by her sweets, or fatigued by her grandeur ; it gives us a few moments to breathe from poetical enthusiasm.

I must make an apology to the shade of Horace, who recommends a prosaic inversion of the order of Poetry, to prove whether or no it is essentially good. I love, I esteem, I revere Horace ; but I hope I can discern between Him, and Truth, when He deserts the bright, and inviolable Goddess. I admit of no pope either in the church, or in the republic of letters. Hardly any Author has afforded me more moral,
and

and poetical pleasure, than Horace. I give Him far more merit than is allowed Him by the fastidious War-ton. He was, in my humble opinion, a true gentleman, a most agree-ble companion, a liberal scholar, and a great poet; a writer of so fine, and elastick a spirit, that He loses more than any other poet by transfusion. But Horace, like other men, had his prejudices; and they gained weight from an Authour of his importance; from having received his poetical sanction. It is well-known that the Greeks were intellectual oracles to the Romans; that the polished, and learned Athenians gave literary

D 2

laws

laws to the conquerours of the world.

*Græcia capta ferum victorem cepit, et artes
Intulit agresti latio.*——

HORACE.

But the Romans, who, in fact *, excelled the Greeks in composition, held the latter in too general admiration, after they themselves had attained a maturity of knowledge, and perfection in writing : the Disciples, to all the rules of their masters, from education, and habit, payed too implicit a homage ; like that of our degenerate English coxcombs to

* Even Polybius and Dionysius of Halicarnassus must bow to the GREAT ROMAN AUTHORS.

Bolingbroke on History.
the

the contemptible manners, and fopperies of the French; or, I might add, like that of many of our literary coxcombs, who affect to admire the limited, and languid writers of France; and to pronounce them equal, nay superiour to the original, and manly genius of England.

Horace had adopted from the Greek school the following dramatick rule; and He prescribes it in his Art of Poetry:

*Neu minor, neu sit quintâ productior actu
Fabula, quæ posci vult, et spectata reponi.*

De Arte Poeticâ, v. 189.

But this rule could only have been derived from arbitrary example; and

it could only have acquired a durable establishment from the tyranny of custom. For should the Drama take it's distinct parts from nature, and propriety, it would certainly be reformed into three acts ; one, for a sketch of the characters, and for the opening of the fable ; another, for the action, and crisis of the plot ; and a third, for it's evolution, and catastrophe. Yet our vassal to the Ancients, I make no doubt, would maintain that five acts are the legitimate division of a play : and I doubt not but He would rivet his position by some shrewd, cabalistical argument.

To

To corroborate my reasoning by a celebrated authority, and to explode the fervile, and dogmatical rules, by which the range of genius hath been confined ; I shall now turn Dr. Warton's weapons upon Himself ; by quoting two passages which he hath inserted in his book, from my admired, and respected friend, the Authour of the Rambler ; who, like a man, like a rational, and free Being, " always thinks for himself," as this writer observes ; and whose extensive, and masterly learning is chastised, and brightened by genuine taste, and by a most acute, and comprehensive judgement. And I would

advise our critick, when He finds that his page requires foreign aid, to be cautious of bringing Johnson's to his assistance. It might prove a dangerous auxiliary ; it might occasion a comparifon, which, from the reader, might be juft, and unavoidable ; but which *He* might think partial, and invidious.

“ It ought to be the first endeavour of a writer (fays the * Rambler) to diftinguifh nature from custom, or that which is eftablifhed because it is right, from that which is right only because it is eftablifhed ; that he may neither

* N^o 156.

“ violate

“ violate essential principles by a
 “ desire of novelty, nor debar Him-
 “ self of the attainment of any beau-
 “ ties within his view, by a need-
 “ less fear of breaking any rules,
 “ where no literary dictator had au-
 “ thority to prescribe.”—The same
 Authour strengthens this generous
 instruction, in another place, by the
 following spirited, and beautiful ob-
 servation.

“ Criticism, though dignified, from
 “ the earliest ages, by the labours of
 “ men eminent for knowledge, and
 “ sagacity, and since the revival of
 “ polite literature, the favourite study
 “ of European scholars, has not yet
 “ attained

“ attained the certainty, and stabi-
 “ lity of science. The rules that
 “ have been hitherto received, are
 “ seldom drawn from any settled
 “ principle, or self-evident postu-
 “ late ; nor are adapted to the na-
 “ tural, and invariable constitution
 “ of things : but will be found,
 “ upon examination, to be the ar-
 “ bitrary edicts of dictators exalted
 “ by their own authority ; who, out
 “ of many means by which the same
 “ end may be attained, selected those
 “ which happened to occur to their
 “ own reflection ; and then by an
 “ edict, which idleness, and timidity
 “ were willing to obey, prohibited

“ any new experiments of wit, re-
 “ strained fancy from the indulgence
 “ of her innate inclination to hazard,
 “ and adventure ; and condemned
 “ all future flights of genius, to per-
 “ sue the path of the Mæonian
 “ Eagle.

“ The authority claimed by cri-
 “ ticks may be more justly opposed,
 “ as it is apparently derived from
 “ Them whom They endeavour to
 “ controul ; for we are indebted for
 “ a very small part of the rules of
 “ writing to the acuteness of Those
 “ by whom they were delivered.
 “ The criticks have generally no
 “ other merit than that of having read
 “ the

“ the works of great Authours with
 “ attention: They have observed the
 “ arrangement of their matter, and
 “ the graces of their expression; and
 “ then expect honour, and rever-
 “ ence for precepts which They
 “ never could have invented: so that
 “ practice has introduced rules, rather
 “ than rules have directed practice.

“ For this reason the laws of every
 “ species of writing have been set-
 “ tled by the ideas of Him by
 “ whom it was first raised to repu-
 “ tation; without much inquiry whe-
 “ ther his performances were not
 “ yet susceptible of improvement.
 “ The excellencies, and the faults
 “ of

“ of celebrated writers have been
 “ equally recommended to poste-
 “ rity; and so far has blind rever-
 “ ence prevailed, that the NUMBER
 “ of their BOOKS has been thought
 “ worthy of imitation.”

Whether Dr. Warton's work, or
 this which I am now writing, is more
 authenticated by these noble strains
 of original sense, and manly elo-
 quence, let a judicious, and impar-
 tial publick determine; after They
 have examined our different senti-
 ments, and opinions, on subjects of
 criticism.

Dr. Warton Himself can some-
 times give us critical observations
 5 which

which are worthy of the Author of the Rambler. With all his prejudices in favour of ancient authority, He allows (pag. 121.) “ That the precepts of the
 “ Art of Poesy were posterior to
 “ practice; that the rules of the
 “ Epopea were all drawn from the
 “ Iliad, and the Odyfsey; and those
 “ of Tragedy, from the Œdipus of
 “ Sophocles. A petulant rejection
 “ (He adds) and an implicit veneration of the rules of the ancient
 “ criticks are equally destructive of
 “ true taste.”

But in *my* humble opinion, so little is effected by scholastick education,
 and

and so much by nature, and our own generous cultivation of noble talents, that I think a poet may be illustrious in his divine art;—in his pastoral numbers, He may soothe, and delight my fancy with the scenes, and pleasures of rural life; the nymph of his imagination may charm me with the graces of her person, and transfix me with the lightning of her eye; in his Drama, He may arrest every faculty of my soul; He may chill me with horror against vice, and inflame me with the love of virtue; in his more important page of general, and sublime instruction, He may call forth all my affections, to
my

my social, and moral duties; he may inspire me with a philosophical contempt of sublunary trifles, and raise me to immortality, and to God; and these energies of His mind He may arrange, and adorn—He may give perspicuity, and beauty to his arguments, his sentiments, and his images, by the *FACUNDIA*, and the *LUCIDUS ORDO*;—all these interesting, and great objects, in *my* humble opinion, He may present; all these *SPECIOSA MIRACULA* He may work, without ever having read Aristotle, or Quintilian, or Warton; who, from his very strange animadversions on the Poetry of Pope, we must

must own, is by far the boldest, and most original critick of the Three.

In Dr. Warton's Dedication to Dr. Young [page xth] we find the following curious passage, which I must not suffer to pass unnoticed.—“ The
 “ sublime, and the pathetick are the
 “ two chief nerves of all genuine
 “ poesy. What is there transcen-
 “ dently sublime, or pathetick in
 “ Pope? In his works there is, in-
 “ deed, nihil inane, nihil arcessitum;
 “ —puro tamen fonti quam magno
 “ flumini propior;—as the excellent
 “ Quintilian remarks of Lyfias. *And*
 “ *because I am perhaps unwilling to*
 “ *speak out in plain English,* I will
 E “ adopt

“ adopt the following passage of
 “ Voltaire ; which, in my opinion,
 “ as exactly characterizes Pope, as it
 “ does his model Boileau, for whom
 “ it was originally designed.—INCA-
 “ PABLE, PEUT-ETRE, DU SUBLIME
 “ QUI ELEVE L’AME, ET DU SENTI-
 “ MENT QUI L’ATTENDRIT ; MAIS
 “ FAIT POUR ECLAIRER CEUX A QUI
 “ LA NATURE ACCORDA L’UN ET
 “ L’AUTRE ; LABORIEUX, SEVERE,
 “ PRECIS, PUR, HARMONIEUX ; IL
 “ DEVINT, ENFIN, LE POETE DE LA
 “ RAISON.”

So you are unwilling to speak out
 in plain English. Yet if you are
 convinced of the truth of what you
 are

are going to advance (and if you are *not*, you should not wantonly asperse an established, and great reputation), this *willingness to wound, and this fear to strike*, are rather unworthy of a *man*. But I have dragged you to the altar of my poetical Deity, and you *shall* speak out; you shall confess, in plain English, before you die. I shall give a faithful translation of the character of Boileau, which you have quoted from Voltaire; and I shall, so far follow your example as to write my translation in capitals; to impress on the reader one of the justest periods that have been written by a brilliant, but prejudiced,

and flimsy writer; and to brand the culprit who traduces Pope.

PERHAPS HE WAS INCAPABLE OF THE SUBLIME WHICH ELEVATES THE SOUL, AND OF THE PATHETICK BY WHICH IT IS MELTED. BUT HE WAS FORMED TO ENLIGHTEN THOSE ON WHOM NATURE HAD BESTOWED BOTH PROPERTIES. HIS LABOUR, HIS SEVERITY, HIS PURITY, HIS ACCURACY, AND HIS HARMONY, CONSTITUTED HIM THE POET OF REASON.

This analysis of Boileau particularizes, and comprehends, at least, all *his* poetical merit. But it enumerates only the lowest of Mr. Pope's characteristicks as a poet; the
 strength

strength of his reasoning faculty, and his inimitable harmony excepted. We have no true, and complete, that is, no great poet, in the French language. Many circumstances, or rather many material, and insuperable disadvantages, preclude a Frenchman from excellence in Poetry. A sameness of disposition, and character; the arbitrary government of the nation; their frivolous, and mechanical manners (for they are a set of despicable apes of one another) and the unaspiring genius of their language; prevent them from ascending to the summit of Parnassus. The French language wants

variety, flexibility, and vigour; so abrupt is the structure, and inflexion of it's words, that they cannot be mellowed, and united by the fire of the poet; they will move in too broken, and unequal a progress; they will not glide amicably into one another. The rhyme, too, of their couplet often consists of it's meagre, it's lifeless terminations with the same letter. The French has not gradation, and tenderness enough to express the pathetick; nor boldness, and energy, to reach the sublime. It may spring, and wanton in the desultory flight, and it may warble in the little musick of the linnæa; but in
vain

vain will it aspire to the majesty ;
to the sounding pinion ; to the li-
quid, and rapid course, and to the
soaring heights of the eagle ; a bird,
emblematical of the Roman, and
English Muse, as well as of the
thunder of Jove.

But the mediocrity of the French
poets proceeds from a cause yet more
determined, and insurmountable ;
from the natural complexion of their
minds ; from the stamina of their
souls. As the conversation, and
composition of an individual are
congenial with the precision, variety,
and strength of the images which
are formed in his mind ; so the lan-

guage of any people takes a spirit, and model, a volubility, and found, fympathetick with the extent and force of the national understanding, and imagination. About the time of the revival of letters, a few great men arose in Italy, who invigorated their language with nerves, and invested it with beauty : but since *their* golden age, it has gradually degenerated ; and is now become characteristick of the modern Italians ; a cunning, superstitious, profligate, and pusillanimous race. The majestic, and sonorous language of Spain is expressive of the gravity, and pomp of the Spaniards : the extreme

treme length of words, and the harsh
 collision of consonants in the High
 Dutch, are hieroglyphical of the un-
 wieldiness, and phlegm of the Ger-
 manic body: the quick, and pert
 air; the incohesive structure; the
 terseness, and petty graces of the
 French, announce a flippant, and
 superficial people; not the admirers
 of a simple, and manly, but the
 dupes of a tinsel, and childish ele-
 gance. The English have infused
 into *their* language, the infinite va-
 riety of their tempers, and hu-
 mours; the unequalled strength,
 and expansion of their intellect;
 the exuberance, and ardour of
 their

their imagination ; and, their LI--
BERTY.

The vehicle of our native language is inseparable from our thoughts, reflections, and contemplations. We naturally, we necessarily think, recollect, and survey the different objects around us, in our mother-tongue ; with which our ideas have been incorporated since our minds were first open to their admittance. Hence the multiplicity of our ideas, their essence, propriety, force, and colour, must be parallel, commensurate, and homogeneous with our language. And hence the thoughts of the French, without
taking

taking their abilities into the question, which are moderate, or at best, ingenious, cannot rise to the genuine standard of Poetry. They are debarred from being eminent poets, by the nature, and circumscription of their language; as Rousseau hath demonstrated that the same causes have baffled their efforts in musick.

It is certain that physical causes operate very powerfully on the human mind; of whatever substance that principle is formed: and I make no doubt that climate has a restrictive, or dilating influence, in limiting, or enlarging the endowments of reason, and fancy. I believe

lieve that no education would enable a native of the Equator, or of Greenland to distinguish himself by his mental faculties. May I not then venture to suppose, that the English climate is of a temperature extremely favourable to freedom, and the Muses; that as it neither enervates us with heat, nor deadens us with frost; but gently, and propitiously inclining to the North, is both cold, and genial, both healthful, and various;—may I not venture to suppose, that as these are the peculiar properties of *our* climate, it powerfully cooperates with our political constitution, to invigorate, actuate, and sublimiate our souls;

souls ; to enliven, and impell courage ; to agitate, and exalt genius ? I offer not this opinion as a theory in which I confide ; I submit it, with deference, to the inquiry, and judgement of others : I give it them, in part, but not altogether, as conjecture, and speculation. I should imitate the writer I am confuting, if I was fond of building castles in the air. And I here beg leave to enter my caveat against any suspicion that I am a gloomy, and inhuman materialist ; for without the sublime, and salutary doctrine of the immateriality, and immortality of the soul, God cannot be justified, nor indigent,

gent, and persecuted virtue, con-
soled.

And I likewise here assure the candid, and well-informed, that though the comparisons I have made of England with other nations, and particularly with France, may have a strong appearance of partiality to my native country, from which few, indeed, are totally exempt; yet I think I can conscientiously assert that I was carefully on my guard against it's intrusion, and suffered it not to mix with the praise which I have bestowed on the English language, and on English abilities. It was purely the result of my best knowledge,

ledge, and of my most accurate observation. There are leading, and general characteristicks of mankind : there are passions ; there is a species, and degree of sense, and sentiment ; there are virtues, and vices, common to all countries, and ages. But our passions ; our sense, and feelings, our moral dispositions, and habits, are variously constituted, and modelled ; they are infinitely diversified, as well as our persons, and aspects. And as one individual is very perceptibly distinguished from any other, not only by his corporeal make, and features, but likewise by the composition of his immaterial substance,

and

and by some singularities in life, and conduct, which He hath appropriated to Himself; so the several communities of the world are palpably marked and discriminated by a national character, partly from the natural, and essential formation of their minds; partly from climate, religion, and policy; and partly from language, customs, and manners.

From captious, and malevolent criticism it is impossible for the most accurate, and best writer to be secured. But we make literary, and publick appeals to people whose learning is tempered with good sense, and generosity; and from Those an

Authour may always expect every reasonable indulgence. Where I said that the abilities of the French were moderate, or at best ingenious, I thought it not necessary, in express terms to limit the assertion; to anticipate the judgement, and sagacity of the ingenuous reader; who would conclude that I excepted the illustrious Montesquieu, and a few more of his countrymen. In all general remarks, a small number of exceptions are supposed; but such exceptions by no means weaken the validity, and scope of those observations. If I harboured a blind, and universal partiality in favour of Eng-

F

land,

land, I should be severely censured by my own reason, and sentiments: for the narrow spirit of national prejudice is one of the many unmanly qualities for which I despise a Frenchman.

The genius, and acquirements of Boileau are justly, and accurately defined by Voltaire. To his definition I shall only add, that I defy Dr. Warton, or any other critick, to produce me ten lines in Boileau, that will be read with unaffected, and vigorous poetical emotion. But Pope's knowledge was liberal, and extensive; his genius was penetrating, and ardent: and it was as rich,
 exten-

extensive, and various as his knowledge. We can hardly read a passage in that instructive, elegant, and harmonious; in that spirited, pathetic, and sublime poet, without very lively pleasure, or very forcible rapture. He no sooner invokes his Muse than she is perfectly propitious to his invocation: he informs, and convinces; he exasperates; he soothes, and melts us; he elevates, and transports us, as the subject requires. You say, He took Boileau for his model; it is impossible that your assertion can be true. He was too good a judge of Poetry himself; and He must have been too

conscious of his own powers, to have had recourse to so cold, and mechanical an example. You may tell me, with equal propriety, that Ben Jonson was the model of Dryden, or Sophocles, of Shakespeare. Pope is an English Pegasus; adorned with splendid, and beautiful trappings; holding a bold, and animated career, and disdainning the ground. Boileau is the first horse of a waggon; distinguished by some frugal, and common ornaments; a passive, laborious, and useful animal; pulling on in a slow, sure, and steady pace; and jingling his bells.

If

If your estimate of Mr. Pope's merit had been directed, and determined by taste, and judgement, you would never have dragged Him down to a level with Boileau ; whose works, indeed, you might have justly ranked with those of Pitt, the translator of Vida's Art of Poetry, and of the Eneïd ; or with the Essay on Satire written by the late Dr. Brown, and prefixed by Warburton to the Moral Essays of Pope ; or with the artificial, and luke-warm Poetry of Addison's Campaign.

You ask what there is transcendently pathetick, and sublime in Pope? One would think the man had

lost his senses. Many passages interspersed throughout his works; his filial Apostrophes to the age, and infirmities of an affectionate mother; his Elegy to the Memory of an unfortunate Lady; his Prologue to Cato; his Eloïsa to Abelard, are all transcendently pathetick. I believe it will be allowed that if any subject is, in it's nature, a ground-work for the pathetick, it is love: and I imagine it will be likewise granted that the Epistle from Eloïsa to Abelard, is the warmest, the most affecting, and admirable amorous Poem in the world. Now, pray, Sir, must not the soul of that writer have been peculiarly

peculiarly formed for the pathetick, who could inspire with all the force, and varieties of the passion, with it's ardour, and ecstacies ; with it's anxieties, distresses, and excruciating torments, every verse of a poem which consists of almost four hundred lines ? and after you had been conversant with that poem ; after you had examined it's composition ; (shall I not pay you a compliment which you do not deserve, if I add) after you had felt it's fire ?—and after you had quoted some of it's very striking parts ; how could you have the absurdity, or the assurance to ask, what there is transcendently pathetick in Pope ?

It may be objected by you, as it has been objected by other cavillers, that Mr. Pope, in this poem, is much indebted to Eloïsa's Letters, for sentiment, for description, and energy. I deny the charge. By far the greater part of his Epistle to Abelard; it's finest, and it's noblest passages, are totally the productions of his own genius. She gives Him, indeed, a few good hints; and as they are applied, enlarged, and embellished by the poet, they deserve not a stronger, and more extensive name. The stem of his generous, and luxurious thought, is, in two or three places, transplanted from the garden of Eloïsa:

Eloïsa : but on that stem Pope has ingrafted all it's beauty, and glory ; it's diffusive, and romantick branches ; the bright verdure of it's foliage ; the orient hues, and aromatick fragrance of it's blossoms. His apposite use of a short combination of ideas which another Authour had formed ; the augmentation, and lustre with which it was heightened, and adorned by Him, and the nervous, and genial strains that flowed entirely from his own source, prove that He never adopted any sentiment from a poverty of imagination.

Many respectable names have been rashly, and confidently accused of
 plagiarism

plagiarism by ignorance, and pedantry. I wish I had sufficient abilities, and importance to condemn this injudicious, and malignant clamour to a perpetual silence, by drawing a clear, and decisive distinction between the mean, and thievish plagiarist, and the writer who avails Himself of his knowledge, by it's warrantable, and liberal application. The Plagiarist is a creature of a fordid spirit; of low capacity, and attainments; and yet He entertains a preposterous passion to be a conspicuous Authour. He may have read many books, and He may have a cold, and retentive memory.

Hence

Hence the only effect of his crude, and undigested reading, is, to remember. And if we merely retain what we read, if it produces not more active, and fruitful consequences, it would have been as well if the contents of the Authours we have perused had not been copied from the library into the mind. The studies of the man whom I am endeavouring to delineate, are not examined, illustrated, and improved by any rational comment of his own; they do not coalesce, they do not incorporate with the little process of his own thoughts; they give rise neither to new reflexions, nor to new imagery.

imagery. Thus when He adventures to write, and when He pretends to be very fine, He steals a series of ideas from some celebrated Authour; and He tags them to his own feeble efforts, without any regard to place, or modification. He gives them not a richer dress; he sets them not in a more advantageous light; they are not, from *his* pen, an improvement; they are not an imitation: they are almost a transcription; and they are an absolute piracy. The unhappy Authour looks like a Mrs. Heidelberg, tricked out for a city-ball; whose ill-chosen and ill-disposed ornaments only invite attention to the
vulgarity

vulgarity of her taste, and to the awkwardness of her manner. The splendid theft of our poetaster is obtruded in too improper a place, and is too dissimilar from the bad company into which it is brought, not to discover the cheat: it stands prominent, and glaring from his flat, and inanimate page. Like Trap-polin, in the Farce, he is not long supported by iniquity. His impudence, and his fictitious ducal Insignia soon fail him; and he is driven off the publick stage, to his primitive obscurity, and contempt.

But the true poetical genius is a Being of a different order. Penetration,

tion, and inquiry, fervour, and excursion, are his properties, and his pleasures. He takes nothing upon trust; He thinks for Himself: and He thinks acutely, comprehensively, and accurately. Proportionable to his reasoning faculty are his feelings. While common mortals are but slightly affected with the beautiful, and the great objects of sense, and sentiment, they find instantaneous admission to the innermost recesses of his plastick soul, and are blended with it's essence. He prosecutes his literary exertions, as well as the enterprizes of his Muse, with his constitutional ardour: He mollifies,

5 and

and subdues the asperities of learning; He incorporates, and harmonizes it with his own thoughts. He acquires from books, and from his converse with the world, those ideas, and that imagery, which are selected by judgement, and adopted by fancy; He confines them not to the dreary limbo of inactive remembrance; that confused receptacle, in dunces, of the Trivial, and the Severe, the Elegant, and the Grand. The just, and animated forms of the True, the Fair, and the Noble, expatiate, and wanton, and love to reside in his bright, and congenial mind; where they completely reflect their originals.

originals. Hence, the knowledge He has gained from study, from observation, and from his intercourse with society, must be such as will be most instructive, entertaining, and interesting to himself, and to mankind. And hence, as He has been long impressed with a great variety of poetical objects, a thought that has been anticipated by another poet, with whom he is conversant, may mix with the effusions of his own imagination; and He may be unconscious of it's Authour. Nor will it be surprizing, if, in some instances, men of a similar genius, naturally, and from their own mental fund,

fund, think, feel, and express themselves, in the same manner, on the same subjects *. In each case, an arrogant critick of enormous appetite, insatiable of reading, and re-

* All that is left us is to recommend our productions by the imitation of the antients: and it will be found true, that in every age, the highest character for sense and learning has been obtained by those who have been most indebted to *them*. For to say truth, whatever is very good sense, must have been common sense in all times; and what we call Learning, is but the knowledge of the sense of our predecessors. Therefore they who say our thoughts are not our own, because they resemble the antients, may as well say our faces are not our own, because they are like our Fathers: And indeed it is very unreasonable, that people should expect us to be scholars, and yet be angry to find us so.

Pope's Preface to his Poems.

G membering,

membering, will rashly, and insolently charge the later poet with plagiarism, to make a parade of his erudition ; to enjoy a puny triumph. When the writer whom I am describing, takes a thought from his literary store, He applies it with a modest reserve to it's Authour's property ; but He applies it without any fear. He is not anxious that the obligation should be concealed. For He works it into his Poem, because it is extremely pertinent, and will have a most happy effect where He inserts it ; and He is conscious that it will receive considerable advantages from the fire, or the polish ;

or

or from the fertility of his Muse. He will breathe into it more spirit; or He will adorn it with more beauty; or He will extend it with a rich, and magnificent amplification. He is conscious, too, that it will be evident from the whole composition, and from other proofs of his poetical powers, that He accepted not this little transient aid from a debility, or lassitude of genius.

It was thus that Pope was entitled to borrow; and it is thus that He acquits Himself when He sometimes borrows from an ancient, or a modern Authour. He always varies, or beautifies; He raises, or ag-

G 2 grandizes

grandizes his adopted sentiment. He resembles, in one striking particular, the foolish Midas of poetical Fable: whatever common metal He touches, He converts it into gold. In general, He works his prodigies, his *speciosa miracula*, by the native impulse, and operation of his own genius. I may mount my climax higher, and yet not deface it with the pompous insignificance, and falsehood of bombast; I may safely add that his *eye often rolls in a fine frenzy*; with the creative lightning of invention

Darteth from Heaven to Earth, from Earth
to Heaven;

And as imagination bodies forth

THE FORMS OF THINGS UNKNOWN,
our Poet's Pen

Turns

Turns them to shape, and gives to airy

NOTHING

A local Habitation, and a Name.

Midsummer-night's Dream.

But if He sometimes takes the suggestion of a preceding writer for his basis; from that basis, our poetical Archimedes, plays his machinery; and moves the world.

They, who to restrain poets from plagiarism, would prohibit Them from a judicious, and moderate application of some striking, and expressive sentiments, which They recollect from books, and conversation; may, for the same reason, dispute their indispensable privilege to copy

from the ample, and inexhaustible page of nature: they may as well forbid Them to paint the Rose; to personify the Zephyr; to describe the limpid, and meandering River; or the founding, and impetuous cataract. They may as well prohibit Them the use of sensation, and reflexion. They may as well insist, that their Poetry should be fraught with images which have no relation to material objects, or to the human passions, and conduct, and yet entertain mankind; that in the true poet, capacity, and knowledge, are the same endowments; archetypes, and resemblances, the same things; that,

that, in short, He makes a various, and interesting world from non-entity. On such a poet I doubt not but the most fastidious hypercritick would confer the palm of originality, and invention ; of which properties Dr. Warton's ideas are almost as confused, and contradictory as the impossible chimera whom I have now exhibited. And such a poet, as the doctrine of innate ideas has been, long ago, exploded, would be infinitely more than a *Maker*, in the temperate signification of his Greek name ; He would be an absolute Creator, in our Doctor's violent conception, and language. For He

G 4 would

would make a universe out of nothing. He would rival the omnipotence of the Deity.

If Dr. Warton had been properly impressed with the truth of the following observation, which is made by Himself, He would not so often, and so rashly, have accused Pope of plagiarism.

“ I am sensible of the difficulty of
 “ distinguishing resemblances from
 “ thefts; and of what a late critick
 “ has urged, that a want of seeming
 “ originality arises, frequently, not
 “ from a barrenness, and timidity of
 “ genius, but from invincible necessity, and the nature of things:
 “ that

“ that the works of Those who pro-
 “ fess an art, whose essence is imita-
 “ tion, must needs be stamped with
 “ a close resemblance to each other,
 “ since the objects, material, or
 “ animate, extraneous, or internal,
 “ which they all imitate, lie equally
 “ open to the observation of all, and
 “ are perfectly similar. Descriptions,
 “ therefore, which are faithful, and
 “ just, must be uniform, and alike;
 “ the first copies may, perhaps, be
 “ entitled to the praise of priority;
 “ but a succeeding one ought not
 “ certainly to be condemned for
 “ plagiarism.”

I can-

I cannot yet lose sight of the glorious Epistle from Eloïsa to Abelard. The records of Literature do not afford an instance of so vigorous, and continued a flame as that which we feel in this divine Poem ; except the *New Eloïsa* of that astonishing Swift, who was forced, by the inhuman treatment He received from his puritanical, and corrupted countrymen, to do Them the indelible dishonour of resigning his privileges in their community. In Rousseau's Work, indeed, all the ardour of genius, in the highest degree ; all the delicacy, and strength of sentiment ; all the variety, and force of imagination,

and

and invention; all the beauties, the graces, and energy of composition, are preserved, with unparalleled, and unremitting powers, through one hundred and sixty-three Letters. But that work is written in prose. And so extremely rare are great poetical talents; we enjoy a pleasure so much more lively, and enthusiastick from exquisite numbers than from the most animated, and elegant prose, and so much more captivating are their charms, that a mind, fired with poetical ambition, would with difficulty determine whether he would wish to have been the Authour of Rousseau's, or of Pope's *Eloïsa*.

I shall

I shall here observe, from the respect, and veneration I bear to the illustrious foreign writer whom I have now mentioned; to enable my readers to form juster distinctions on objects of criticism; to console humble capacities, and to humble the pride of learning, and of genius; that the late Mr. Gray's opinion of the New Eloïsa betrayed a depravity of judgement approaching to insanity. He despised this unequalled, and immortal novel; and He was in raptures with *Fingal*. He infinitely preferred a profuse tautology of the most vulgar sentiments; of the most bleak, and horrid images;—

He

He infinitely preferred the very froth of puerile declamation, to the justest, and the noblest sentiments ; to the most varied, and luxuriant imagery ; to the very nerves, and soul of eloquence ; to the genuine substance, and splendour of composition. So dangerous, and fatal to reason, and to sentiment, is natural caprice, a Taste nauseated by a long habitude to literary objects ; and the intoxicating adulation of a few fawning academicians. The bottom of Lethe, to which Fingal is now consigned ; the universal, and eager attention which is given to the writings of Rousseau ; the applause of Europe ;

and his established fame, are the sacred, and unanswerable vouchers for my admiration of that original, and capital genius. The same universal, and intimate acquaintance with the works of Pope; the same universal applause; the same fixed, and immortal fame, are the respectable, and incontrovertible warrants for my defence, for my idolatry of that great poet. These vouchers, whose united suffrages are the voice of nature, the most passionate worshipers of Mr. Gray's memory will be presumptuous, if They contradict. These vouchers even Dr. Warton himself will no longer oppose; if,
after

after his bold attack on Pope, He has that proportion of modesty left, with which the confidence of the scholar should be corrected, and the manners of the Gentleman, adorned.

The small number, and size of the excellent productions with which Mr. Gray hath enriched our English Poetry, prove that his talents were checked by an unreasonable, whimsical, and insuperable difficulty of being satisfied with his own compositions; and by an unmanly timidity to appear, in the character of an Author, before a generous publick, with whom the defects, and errours of a Poem will never occasion any material

material disgust, if in that Poem, the true poetical spirit is predominant. These inferences are more evidently proved from those premises, if we consider that He passed the greater part of his life in a celebrated seat of the Muses; that He was not dissipated, and licentious, but collected, and studious; and that his mind, was, therefore, not chilled, and embarrassed by poverty; but free from that indigence, and those anxieties, by which poetical genius is commonly depressed, and persecuted; partly, from the misconduct which is produced by strong sensibility and passions; and partly, from fortune's inflexible,

inflexible, and stupid aversion to learning, and to wit. From his minute, superstitious, and false delicacy of taste; from his timorous pride, in venturing forth as a writer; from the uncouth, and unaffecting subjects, and images, to which He frequently has recourse; from the surprizing inequality, which, in his different productions, is very sensibly felt by every unprejudiced, and true critick; and from the labour with which most of his Poems are stiffly characterized; — from these principles I likewise conclude, that there was a languor, and effeminacy in his mental frame; that his Muse

H

was

was often deaf to his invocation; that the current of his fancy was often weakened, contracted, and obstructed, by some constitutional poverty, and frost; and that his best compositions were the effects of a temporary, but fortunate sunshine, and warmth of soul, producing as happy a sympathy with those objects which were most correspondent with his mind; more than of an essential, and permanent brightness, and ardour of genius. This observation will neither seem invidious, nor imaginary to Those who reflect that the human mind, is, in different persons, complicated, and diversified to
an

an infinite variety ; and that greater poets than Mr. Gray have their conspicuous master-pieces ; though they may not outshine their other works with so preeminent a lustre as the famous Elegy, written in a Country-church-yard, excells other Poems of the same Authour.

Peace be to the quietism of the undistinguishing, imitative, and servile admirers of any poet ! And sacred be every striking, and immortal monument of departed, or of living genius ! That Elegy does honour to the English nation ; it is a highly finished, a beautiful, a most admirable Poem. It will be read, and

celebrated as long as our language is understood, and as long as mankind retain the sentiments of humanity.

In his Progress of Poetry He has caught the true spirit of the Ode; He has conducted it with judgement, enriched it with invention, and raised it to sublimity. In the different encomiums which, in that Ode, He pays to our greatest English poets, He justly, and nobly distinguishes, and characterizes their different, and peculiar merits. In his Ode on the Spring, in his Distant Prospect of Eton-College, and in his Hymn to Adversity, He has enforced the most useful, and important

tant moral truths with remarkable elegance, and strength of imagination. But his justly admired Elegy excells all his other pieces, by that artful, and elegant ease, by that *curiosa felicitas*, which is *apparently* spontaneous, and which is the perfection of writing. Here, with regret, I must limit my ingenuous, and ardent praise of this poet. In his Ode, entitled, The Bard, his Muse often deviates from the poetical tract, and pursues her course with unequal wing. He prefixes the following Advertisement to his Progress of Poetry and the Ode on which I am now hazarding some remarks:

H. 3

“ When

“ When the Authour first published
 “ this, and the following Ode, He
 “ was advised, even by his friends,
 “ to subjoin some few explanatory
 “ Notes; but had too much respect
 “ for the understanding of his readers
 “ to take that liberty.”—Instead of
respect for the understanding of his
readers, He should have said, *respect*
for their knowledge, or information.

If the reasoning, and sentiments of a
 Poem are at all obscure, it's Au-
 thour has defeated the aim of Poetry,
 which is, immediately to affect the
 mind. It deserves not to be read.
 But if the subject of a Poem is ob-
 scure, or not generally known, or
 not

not interesting, and if it abounds with allusions, and facts of this improper, and uninteresting character, the writer who chuses that subject, and introduces those improper, and unaffecting allusions, and facts, betrays a great want of poetical judgement, and taste. Mr. Gray had a vitiated fondness for such insipid fable, narrative, and references. I cannot find that his Progress of Poetry wanted one explanatory Note, for the information, even of superficial readers. The subject of the Bard is a fine foundation for his Ode, which, in many places, is very vigorous, and picturesque But

it's Prophecy is too circumstantially historical ; it recites a long series of passages from our Annals, which are either forgotten, or not regarded by many who are far from being illiterate. Here, as a considerable number of explanatory Notes is, consequently, necessary, the flow, and warmth of the reader's mind, while He accompanies the poet, is checked, and broken, whenever He is obliged to consult the Anecdotes at the bottom of the page : and after this interruption, He recovers not, even with the assistance of the Notes, that ardour which a well-written Poem should not only inspire, but maintain.

tain. The works of the greatest, and least exceptionable poets who lived two or three thousand years ago, must, undoubtedly, be illustrated with many Notes; for they must often refer to History which time hath veiled; to laws, and customs which He hath long abolished; and to persons, whose names, had it not been for the power of song, would have followed Them to oblivion. Yet when those Authours flourished, perhaps all these objects were obvious, and popular. The modern poet, therefore, if his Fable is not entirely his own, should found his work on a fact from History which

which is important, striking, and consequently, well-known ; or on a moral subject of equal dignity ; or on a light, and gay Theme ; which, however, may be so spirited, and coloured as to give a lively impulse to sentiment, and fancy ; and so essentially detached from local, and transitory mode, so applicable to universal taste, or passion, as to invite the attention of all civilized countries, and ages.

With the main object of the judicious poet, the collateral parts of his Poem will be consistent. The names which He celebrates will be selected from the Register of Fame : or he will give equal dignity to his own
 fictitious

fictitious names : for the touch of a poet's pen confers immortality. The facts which he concisely, and forcibly relates, or to which He pertinently alludes; and the incidents, and images with which He embellishes his piece, will be such as must ever afford a most lively sympathy, and pleasure to sensible, and cultivated minds. The Works of the most ardent, and judicious poets principally want illustration, where we meet with the names of some of their cotemporaries, whom they have *damned to everlasting fame*, or whom they have embalmed with their encomium. But those poets are, universally,

versally, and will be, perpetually admired, not only because they possessed great force of genius; but likewise from their exertion of that genius on subjects worthy of their numbers; on characters renowned for splendid virtues, or crimes; on the pleasing, or majestic objects of nature; on elegant, or tender, or heroic sentiment; on important, and eternal truth.

Mr. Gray, in his Ode for the Installation of the Duke of Grafton, as Chancellour to the University of Cambridge, deviates more than in his Bard, from the province of the poet, by his allusions to many facts
in

in our History, which make but a feeble impression on minds endowed with poetical ardour; and can only be familiar to those who possess a retentive, but a cold, and undistinguishing memory. To enumerate the other faults of this Ode; to analyze it by a particular animadversion, would be ungenerous to departed merit. Let the liberal critick recollect that while it was composed by Gray, He payed the tribute of obligation, and gratitude. Let us compassionate the genius who found it his indispensable duty to stoop to an ignoble homage, on the exemption from which, He congratulates

lates the shades of his humble swains: let us compassionate the man of delicate honour who ONCE *heaped the shrine of luxury, and pride, with incense kindled at the Muse's flame*—who ONCE praised a Duke of Grafton.

I observe, with regret, that this polite scholar, this true genius; after he has given proofs of his excellence in Poetry; whether misled by a whimsical, and extravagant taste, or palled with the luxuriance of classical ground; often deserts the elegant, and sublime objects of Greece, and Italy, and England; and chuses for the themes, and ornaments

ornaments of his Muse, the dreary heaths, the howling caves; the warp and woof, and vile webs of the North. A preposterous love of these disgusting, and squalid subjects is, indeed, consistent with the critical judgement which admired *Macpherson*, and despised *Rousseau*. To this vitiated mental appetite, which is as coarse as it is squeamish, there is a sensual analogy. We often see veterans in epicureism refuse every delicacy of a magnificent table; and feast on some exotick, but harsh novelty, which would be extremely unpalatable to a laborious peasant;—some fortunate,
and

and noble effort of culinary invention !

The Poems of Mr. Gray which exhibit these polar images, are suitable to their subjects. Their simplicity is vulgar ; their elevation is bombast.

His *Long Story* is what long stories are in general, dry, and despicable. That Mr. Gray should have authorized the publication of that confused, and tedious Poem, in the splendid edition of his best pieces, with Bentley's Designs, is a surprising Phænomenon in the literary world, and a very singular proof that an Authour is unqualified to judge

judge of his own productions. The Quarto-Edition of Gray's Works, which was published by Mr. Mason soon after his death, might be another object of learned speculation, if selfishness and vanity were uncommon faults ; and if high-treason to friendship was an uncommon crime. If there is on earth a sacred obligation, it is the moral precept which commands us with a voice more authoritative than that of Law, to revere, with a most delicate Religion, in language, and in conduct, the memory of a departed Friend. Mr. Mason well knew that Gray could not bear the thought of suffer-

I

ing

ing his likeness to go abroad. Unfortunately, however, for the poet's face, it was exactly remembered by Mr. Mason, and Mr. Wilson, who, in the use They made of that remembrance, gave an eminent proof of their affection for the dead. To *Them* we are indebted for a print of our Authour; by which the extravagant price of his works was probably given with less reluctance; but from which we certainly form no pleasing idea of the original. Were our poet now to rise from the grave, with what indignation would He learn, that his image had been stolen, in the secure hours of society, and
confidence,

confidence, by two men who called
 Themselves his Friends ;—that after
 his death, it was by *Them* commu-
 nicated to the artist, and sacrilegi-
 ously published, and sold ; and that
 by one of *Them* the refuse of his
 mind was obtruded on the notice of
 the world ; the careless, and trifling
 Letters which He had written to the
 pedantic, and imitative sops of his
 university ! I have now two culprits
 in my eye, who are not compre-
 hended in our criminal Laws ; to
 whom the world has been too in-
 dulent, because They have gratified
 it's idle curiosity ; and who, there-
 fore, should be punished with a poe-

tical proscription ; who should not be suffered to *walk the world, in credit, to their grave.* The culprits are, MR. WILLIAM MASON, and MRS. EUGENIA STANHOPE.

Mr. Mason had one clear, and cogent reason for publishing that Volume of unequal, and promiscuous Contents ;—his own consequence as an Authour. For his Friend, in the Text, and Himself, in the Comment, are sufficiently industrious to persuade the publick that He is a great poet. All the truly sensible, and judicious readers, who have looked into *your* pages, Mr. Mason, must have seen their vanity, and their servility.

servility. You have been deceived into a high opinion of your poetical talents, by your own self-love; by Mr. Gray's partiality for an old acquaintance (I will not call you his *Friend*) by the temporary power of the press to give dignity to trifles; by the miserable arts of theatrical managers to procure popularity for a tinsel Play;—and by the crouds that frequent our theatres, not because a piece is interesting in it's fable, various, and striking in it's characters; affecting in it's sentiments; and noble in it's language;—but because it is in short-lived fashion. The distinguishing, and

ingenuous few, whose opinions of men, and books, result from ardent sentiment, and independent reason, will tell you, that your verses are not admired by one of your cotemporaries, whose praise ought to agitate ambition ; that they are of a quaint, and languid, and perishable constitution ; that they will soon sink, on the stream of time ; that they will be totally unknown to posterity.

Mr. Gray undervalued, or affected to undervalue, the poetical abilities of Dr. Akenfide. He thinks that mediocrity is his general characteristic ; that He is often obscure ; but that He sometimes is excellent ;
 particularly

particularly in description. Mr. Mason observes, in a Note to the Letter which contains these remarks, that Mr. Gray's opinion of *The Pleasures of Imagination*, and the Doctor's, must have been the same; because He had intended to publish that Poem on a more extensive, and accurate plan; as is evident from the posthumous Edition of his Works. In this observation I cannot find common sense. Can we reasonably conclude that an Authour thinks but indifferently of the merit of his own Poem, because He intends to republish it with considerable alterations, and additions?

I admire merit as much as I dislike impertinence, and presumption. Akenfide was a great poet. It must be owned that in his Pleasures of Imagination He is frequently too philosophical, and scientifick: But the faults of that immortal Poem are lost in the brightness of it's tender, and masculine beauties. Horace Himself might have been proud to have been the Authour of his Odes. They are characterized with ease, with eloquence; and with all the enthusiasm of the poet. His untimely death was an irreparable loss to society, and to every Friend of the Muses. By the contemptible,
but

but too decisive echos of arbitrary fame; by the envy of mankind; and by a strange fatality in sublunary things, this illustrious poet holds not the rank which He deserves, in the publick eye. May it hereafter be remembered that He hath written a far greater number of excellent Odes than Gray!—As for that Mason; that puerile Florist; that *English*, or rather, *Scotch Gardener*; He would have been highly honoured if He had been Akenfide's Amanuensis.

If the liberty which I have taken with Gray, should offend his admirers, I beg leave to assure Them, that I,

too am a warm admirer of the capital productions of that great poet; and that I took this liberty, by no means to indulge an envious temper; but to emancipate poetical criticism from all prejudice, and to assert it's free jurisdiction. And I farther beg leave to inform Them, that *Nature*, the *Legislatrix of the DEITY*, not Cambridge, is *my ALMA MATER*.

If it be objected, that by thus investigating Mr. Gray's Title to Immortality, I have wandered in a digression unconnected with my main objects; I reply, that by impartially examining the merit of the different productions of a celebrated genius,
which

which have been too hastily, and indiscriminately admired, I think I have rather illustrated, than forgotten, the subject of my Treatise; that by endeavouring to assign to each of those productions it's respective rank in the poetick scale, we improve in a just, and distinguishing taste; in the accuracy of poetical criticism; and we, consequently, gain a more perspicuous, and comprehensive knowledge of the constituents of Poetry. After finding, too, that, of the little which was written by Gray, but a small part is excellent, we are taught more properly to esteem, more highly to admire, and revere, Pope; who

who wrote many poems, which, after a very few exceptions, are, all, elegant, and beautiful, and great.

Dr. Warton asks, in the tenth page of his Dedication, *what there is transcendently sublime in Pope?*—An illiterate, and impertinent coxcomb; a French Abbé, ironically asked a gentleman, whom He heard profuse of encomium on a country which has been admired, and praised by a Montesquieu, and a Helvetius, *what there was remarkably great in England?* But I shall give a direct answer to the Doctor's question.

Pope's Universal Prayer is transcendently sublime. His Prologue to
the

the Tragedy of Cato is transcendently sublime. So are many parts of his Essay on Man. In his Address to Lord Bolingbroke, at the conclusion of that excellent Poem, He displays, as Dr. Warburton justly observes, all the characteristicks, and ornaments which Longinus gives to the sublime, in a spirit, in a symmetry, and in a language, perhaps unequalled by man. Sir, a summer's day would elapse before we could read all that is transcendently sublime in Pope.

He was endowed with so feeling, so elegant, and ardent a soul ; He was so eminently, so peculiarly qualified by
nature

nature to animate, and adorn any object which He intended to exhibit with all the graces, that if He had only favoured the world with his Translation of the Iliad, it would have ranked Him with our great, and celebrated poets. If we except the simplicity of the Greek bard; if we except the natural harmony, and energy of the Greek language; every reader who is truly learned; every manly scholar, whose mind is free from prejudice, and fraught with sentiment, must allow, that Pope, in general, * excells his original,

in

* Lorsque la reputation d'un homme, ou d'un ouvrage est établie, nous les louons souvent sans les estimer. Nous n'avons pas
pour

in propriety, in beauty, and in fire.
*He persued the path of the Mæonian
 Eagle, with a vigorous wing, and
 with an undazzled eye. Emboldened
 by the flight of his daring Master,*
 and emulous of his glory, He rose
 to heights, in the Æther of Parnassus,
 unexplored even by *Him*. In short,
 HE IMPROVED ON HOMER.

pour eux une estime sentie, mais une
 estime sur parole. Telle est l'estime générale
 pour Homère, que tout le monde loue,
 et qui n'est lû que des gens de Lettres.
 "When the reputation of a man, or a book is
 "once established, we praise the one or the
 "other without hesitation.—But we are often
 "the mere echoes of their praise: we *feel* not
 "our esteem of them; it is only adopted.
 "Such is the universal veneration for the me-
 "mory of Homer. He is admired by All:
 "but He is only read by men of Letters."
 The excellent Authour of the Life of Helvetius.

There perhaps never was a poet who softened, and mellowed such delicacy, and refinement, such dignity, and strength, with so liberal, and polite an ease as Pope. But such Poetry will not be admired by criticks of a vitiated, and insatiable taste. In a most happy selection of those ideas, and images which give a lively, and forcible pleasure to human nature; in their new, and beautiful connexion; in the spontaneous, but strong language of the heart, and passions, in which those ideas, and images are conveyed, *They* see nothing great; nothing above mediocrity. Their Gothick
souls

souls are only stimulated with the *transcendently* sublime; or, in other words, with the unnatural, the gigantick, and the incoherent. Are you ambitious of eulogium from such readers? If you can only astonish Them, They will immediately pronounce you sublime. In sentiment, give them all the extravagance, and madness of ill-imagined passion. In painting, let all your figures be grotesque; let all your colouring be Chinese. Give Them a huddle, and a crash of objects; the gardens of Sir William Chambers;—the very Advertisements of a Langford;—the very Poetry of the Wartons.

K

Dr.

Dr. Warton is of opinion (page 278th of his Essay) that if Mr. Pope had written an Epic Poem, He was “ so DIDACTIC A GENIUS, that He “ would have been deficient in that “ sublime, and pathetick, which are “ the main nerves of the Epopèa.”

I do not pretend, Dr. Warton, nor am I ambitious, to be so profound a Grecian as you ; but I think I know the meaning of the word, *Didactick*. In it's primary, and simple application, it signifies, *Instructive*. But you know that by long, and established use (quem penes arbitrium est, et jus, et norma loquendi) this Greek word, which has been adopted
into

into the English language, has a limited and particular signification. It is an epithet which we give to a Poem, that, with order, and perspicuity; with the mildest charms of verse, inculcates the rules we are to observe in acquiring, or practising an art, or science. The Didactick is, consequently a species of Poetry which, in general, admits not adventurous excursion; generous enthusiasm; the bolder flights of the Muse. I must here observe, that an art or science of a secondary, or of a distinct, and circumscribed order, is a subject for a didactick poet. He who chuses, and adequately displays a theme, in

which our conduct, and our passions are universally, and momentously interested, is a poet of a superiour class. Agreeably to this division of poetical territory, Lucretius is not a didactick poet; for his subject is, The Nature of the Universe;—Juvenal is not a didactick poet; for his province is, A general Enforcement of Virtue; and a general Hostility against Vice:—Horace is professedly a didactick poet, in his Art of Poetry; but not in any other part of his works:—Virgil is a didactick poet in his Georgicks; but not in his Æneid:—Armstrong is a didactick poet in his Art of preserving

serving Health :—but Akenſide is not a didactick poet : for *He* ranges through an extenſive, and luxuriant field ; The Pleaſures of Imagination.

I hope I ſhall be excuſed for this minute, and ſcholaſtick definition of a word. I remember, Mr. Locke told me, many years ago, that if diſputants would begin, by affixing clear ideas to their leading terms, many arguments would be prevented, or ſoon determined.

If then I have marked, with any accuracy, the ſphere of the *Didactick*, is our inimitable Tranſlator of Homer a didactick poet ? Should we characterize *Him* by that humble

epithet, who left us many august monuments of genius; and who wrote but one poem to which that epithet can be applied; his Essay on Criticism; and certainly, one of the noblest didactic poems in the world? Were didactic talents the predominant abilities in *Him* who showed such inventive powers in his beautiful Rape of the Lock;—who painted all the variety, and force of the passions, in such animated forms, and in such glowing colours? Is it not profane, to pronounce *Him* so didactic a poet, who unfolded, and enforced, all the relations, and duties of man; who in the strain of so

sublime

sublime a religion, connected the physical, and moral world, with the Supreme Being?—who *looked*, with so pervading, and rapturous an eye, *from Nature, up to Nature's God?*

More illustrious atchievements than didactick Poems are attributed to Mr. Pope by Voltaire. I shall quote the French verses to which I refer: they very justly describe the moral excellence of our great poet. Voltaire had mentioned Horace, and Boileau. He adds;

Vous y cherchiez le vrai; vous y goutiez
le Beau;

Quelques traits echappés, d'une utile morale,

Dans leurs piquants ecrits brillent par intervalle.

Mais POPE approfondit ce qu'ils ont effleuré;
D'un Esprit plus hardi, d'un pas plus assuré,
Il porta le Flambeau dans l'Abime de l'Etre;
Et l'Homme avec lui seul apprit à se con-
noître.

L'Art quelquefois frivole, et quelquefois
divin,

L'Art des vers est, dans POPE, utile au
Genre humain.

Voltaire ;—Au Roi De Prusse.

This is a much higher praise than
that which Voltaire gives to Boileau ;
and which *You*, Dr. Warton, who
are an Englishman, and a scholar,
and who pretend to be a critick,
think equally characteristick of Pope.

Is

Is it not shameful that *you* should endeavour to lessen the merit of a most exalted genius; who did such honour to his country, and to human nature; while He is deemed a poet of the first magnitude by a superficial Frenchman, who is notorious for his national prejudices; who cannot possibly judge of English Poetry so well as a young Etonian; and who, amidst his more profligate, and atrocious blasphemies, impiously prated, in the same breath, about Shakespeare, and Corneille?

A little, undermining critick seldom attempts to degrade established, and high reputation, without timidity,

dity, hesitation, and inconsistency. The writer who tells us in one part of his book that Pope is rather a sensible, and elegant, than a vigorous, and great poet, in another place, throws a French veil over his presumptuous opinion; and acknowledges that “He is unwilling to “speak out in plain English:”—The writer who denies that Pope was master of the “Pathetic,” and the “Sublime,” calls Him, “our last “GREAT POET.”—He, who with an unaccountable absurdity, classes the abilities of Pope in the didactic degree, asserts that “his Prologue “to Cato is far superiour to any
“ of

“ of the Prologues of Dryden ; that
 “ it is more lofty than any thing
 “ in the Tragedy itself ; that it is
 “ what the subject required it to be,
 “ solemn, and SUBLIME.” He, who,
 with an extravagance, and futility
 of observation, that deserve only a
 smile of contempt, would persuade
 us, that “ Pope’s close, and constant
 “ reasoning had impaired, and crush-
 “ ed the faculty of imagination,”—
 yet ventures to declare, that the
 Rape of the Lock is a Poem which
 cannot be too much admired, and
 applauded ;—that it abounds with
 fine invention ; and that Pope, has,
 in *that* Poem, EXCELLED ANY THING

IN SHAKESPEARE ; OR PERHAPS, IN
ANY OTHER AUTHOUR.

I shall now beg leave to quote
some passages which are peculiarly
striking, from the works of Pope.
I transcribe not these passages to
enlarge the size of this Essay : but
I think the review of them will be
entertaining even to Those who are
most conversant with our admirable
Poet :—and I hope they will con-
tribute to evince his various excel-
lence ;—to satisfy Those, on whose
memory his Poetry is not so strongly
impressed, that my opposition to
Warton has been a defence of na-
ture, of sentiment, and of truth ; and
that

that I have not been too lavish of encomiums on a truly great genius, to the productions of whose Muse, I owe my noblest pleasures, and my best impressions.

It is difficult to select from 'The Rape of the Lock' a passage or two, superiour to the general strain of that Poem: it is all so beautiful. In the following lines, however, which make a part of the speech of Ariel, in the Second Canto, to his Denizens of Air, the invention, and imagination of the poet, and his delicate humour, are eminently displayed.

Ye

Ye Sylphs, and Sylphids, to your Chief
give ear,

Fays, Fairies, Genii; Elves, and Dæmons,
hear!

Ye know the spheres, and various tasks
assigned,

By laws eternal, to the aërial kind.

Some in the fields of purest Æther play;

And bask, and whiten in the blaze of day.

Some guide the course of wandering orbs
on high;

Or roll the planets through the boundless sky.

Some, less refined, beneath the moon's pale
light,

Pursue the stars that shoot athwart the night;

Or suck the mists in grosser air below;

Or dip their pinions in the painted bow;

Or brew fierce tempests on the wintry main;

Or o'er the glebe distill the kindly rain.

Others

Others on earth o'er human race preside ;
 Watch all their ways, and all their actions
 guide ;

Of these, the chief the care of nations own ;
 And guard with arms divine the British throne.

Our humbler province is to tend the fair ;
 Not a less pleasing, though less glorious care ;
 To save the powder from too rude a gale ;
 Nor let the imprisoned essences exhale ;
 To draw fresh colours from the vernal flowers ;
 To steal from rainbows, ere they drop in
 showers,

A brighter wash ; to curl their waving hairs ;
 Assist their blushes, and inspire their airs.

Nay oft, in dreams, invention we bestow,
 To change a flounce, or add a furbelow.

Rape of the Lock. Canto II. v. 73.

I shall now give the lines which
 close this unrivalled Poem. They

are exquisitely beautiful: they are characterized, like those which I have now quoted, with elegance, and luxuriance of fancy; and with delicacy of humour. They disarmed Warton of his Greek truncheon. They are (says He) at once, *DULCE LOQUI*, and *RIDERE DECORUM*. Belinda demanded her Lock in vain.—It could not be found. It occasioned various conjectures.

Some thought it mounted to the lunar sphere. The poet thus announces it's more exalted fate.

But trust the Muse—She saw it upward rise,
Though marked by none but quick, poetick
eyes.

So

{So Rome's great founder to the Heavens
withdrew,

To Proculus alone confessed in view)

A sudden star it shot through liquid air ;

And drew, behind, a radiant trail of hair.

Not Berenice's locks first rose so bright,

The Heavens bespangling with dishevelled
light.

The Sylphs behold it kindling, as it flies ;

And pleased, pursue it's progress through the
skies.

This the beau monde shall from the mall
survey,

And hail with musick it's propitious ray.

This the blest lover shall for Venus take ;

And send up vows from Rosamonda's lake.

This Partridge soon shall view in cloudless
skies,

When next He looks through Galileo's eyes ;

And hence the egregious wizard shall foredoom

The fate of Louis, and the fall of Rome.

L

Then

Then cease, bright Nymph, to mourn thy
ravished hair,

Which adds new glory to the shining sphere!
Not all the tresses *that* fair Head can boast,
Shall draw such envy as the lock you lost.

For after all the murders of your eye;
When, after millions slain, yourself shall die;
When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,
And all those tresses shall be laid in dust;
This lock the Muse shall consecrate to Fame;
And 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name.

Rape of the Lock. Canto V. v. 123.

Let us next view Him, as a moral poet; a poet who was ardently engaged in the defence, and praise of virtue; and in whom vice found a most indignant, and formidable foe. In the following quotation, He throws out his independent, and

noble spirit; the poignancy of his Satire; and that concise, manly, and generous Eulogium on his Friends, in which we can hardly exemplify an equal to Pope. The person with whom He is holding a poetical dialogue, warns Him of the dangers to which He will be exposed by his satirical publications. The poet replies:

What! armed for virtue, when I point
the pen,
Brand the bold front of guilty, shameless men;
Dash the proud gamester in his gilded car;
Bare the mean heart that lurks beneath a star;
Can there be wanting, to defend her cause,
Lights of the church, or guardians of the
laws?

Could pensioned Boileau lash, in honest
strain,

Flatterers, and bigots, even in Louis' reign?
Could laureat Dryden, Pimp, and Friar
engage,

Yet neither Charles, nor James be in a rage?
And *I* not strip the gilding off a knave,
Unplaced, unpensioned, no man's heir, or
slave!

I will, or perish in the generous cause;—
Hear this, and tremble, you who 'scape the
laws!

Yes, while I live, no rich, or noble knave,
Shall walk the world in credit to his grave.
To virtue only, and *her* friends, a friend,
The world beside may murmur, or commend.
Know, all the distant din that world can keep,
Rolls o'er my grotto, and but soothes my sleep.
There, my retreat the best companions grace,
Chiefs out of war, and statesmen out of place.

There,

There, St. John mingles with the friendly
bowl

The feast of reason, and the flow of soul.

And He, whose lightning pierced the Iberian
lines,

Now forms my quincunx, and now ranks
my vines ;

Or tames the genius of the stubborn plain,

Almost as quickly as He conquered Spain.

Satire I. v. 105.

With the same spirit He describes
the force, and dignity of moral ridi-
cule ; and makes an apostrophe to
some of it's objects.

O ! sacred weapon, left for truth's defence ;

Sole dread of folly, vice, and insolence !

To All but heaven-directed hands denied ;

The Muse may give Thee ; but the Gods
must guide.

Reverent I touch Thee ; but with honest
zeal ;

To rouse the watchmen of the publick weal ;

To Virtue's work provoke the tardy hall ;

And goad the prelate flumbering in his stall.

Ye tinsel insects, whom a court maintains,

'That counts your beauties only by your
stains ;

Spin all your cobwebs o'er the eye of day !

The Muse's wing shall brush you all away !

All his Grace preaches ; all his Lordship
sings ;

All that makes Saints of Queens, and Gods
of Kings ;

All, all but Truth drops dead-born from the
press,

Like the last Gazette, or the last address.

Epilogue to his Satires, v. 212.

Permit me to transcribe a passage
from his Essay on Man. It is one of
the

the innumerable instances which might be brought, of his penetrating, and masterly understanding; of his intimate knowledge of the human heart, and mind.

As man, perhaps, the moment of his
 breath,
 Receives the lurking principle of death;
 The young disease; that must subdue at
 length,
 Grows with his growth, and strengthens
 with his strength:
 So, cast and mingled with his very frame,
 The mind's disease, its RULING PASSION
 came;
 Each vital humour which should feed the
 whole,
 Soon flows to this, in body and in soul:

Whatever warms the heart, or fills the head,
 As the mind opens, and its functions spread,
 Imagination plies her dangerous art,
 And pours it all upon the peccant part.
 Nature its mother, Habit is its nurse ;
 Wit, spirit, faculties, but make it worse ;
 Reason itself but gives it edge and pow'r ;
 As Heaven's blessed beam turns vinegar more
 four.

We, wretched subjects though to lawful
 sway,

In this weak queen, some favorite still obey.
 Ah! if she lend not arms, as well as rules,
 What can she more than tell us we are fools ?
 Teach us to mourn our nature, not to mend,
 A sharp accuser, but a helpless friend !

Essay on Man, Epistle II. v. 133.

My last quotation, to exemplify the
 genius of Pope, shall be his address
 to

to Lord Bolingbroke, at the close of his Essay on Man, which I have already mentioned. It is a bright, and glowing poetical texture of the eloquent, the polite, the philosophical, the magnificent, and the sublime.

Come then, my friend ; my genius, come along ;

Oh master of the poet, and the song !

And while the Muse now stoops, or now ascends,

To man's low passions, or their glorious ends ;

Teach me, like Thee, in various Nature wise,

To fall with dignity, with temper rise ;

Formed by thy converse, happily to steer

From grave to gay ; from lively to severe ;

Correct with spirit, elegant with ease ;

Intent to reason, or polite to please.

Oh !

Oh! while along the stream of time thy
name

Expanded flies, and gathers all it's fame ;

Say, shall *my* little bark attendant fail ;

Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale !

When Statesmen, heroes, kings, in dust repose,

Whose sons shall blush their fathers were *thy*
foes ;

Shall then this verse to future age pretend

Thou wert my guide, philosopher, and
friend ?

That, urged by Thee, I turned the tuneful art
From sounds to things ; from fancy to the
heart ;

For wit's false mirror held up Nature's
light ;

Showed erring pride whatever is, is right ;

That reason, passion, answer one great aim,

That true self-love, and social are the same ;

That

That virtue only makes our bliss below ;
 And all our knowledge is, OURSELVES TO
 KNOW ? *

If it should seem ridiculous, at least, insignificant, to have requested the attention of the publick to a few rays amidst a blaze of poetical splendour ; to have dwelt, with admiration on two or three stars in the Galaxy ; I have only to offer, in apology for this work of apparently critical supererogation, that

* Each word, in this peroration, is, as it is placed, and connected, the perfection of writing, except the word, *along*, at the end of the first line, which is feeble, and redundant. This trivial defect, from the ardour which the majestick opening of the passage, naturally produces in the imagination of the reader, has hitherto escaped observation.

the

the passages which I have cited, corroborate, in a certain degree, what I have written, in the vindication, and praise of our celebrated poet ;—that FIFTY EXCELLENT LINES were never written but by one whose soul had been enriched, and harmonized by the Muses ;—and that the quotations from Pope, which I have inserted in this Essay, could only have been produced by * A VERY GREAT GENIUS.

* I am afraid it is, at present too fashionable to prefer a Sacchini to a Handel, and even a Mason to a Pope. It is remarked by the ablest political writers, that the prevalence of a childish, and preposterous taste in the fine arts, after the golden reign of one that has been masculine and noble, is one of the portentous preludes to the ruin of a state.

I shall

I shall quote, and criticize an observation or two more made by Dr. Warton in the Treatise to which I refer, more fully to evince that this Gentleman is by no means qualified to censure, and undervalue one of our greatest poets.

“ To attempt to *understand* Poetry”
 (says he, page 167) “ without hav-
 “ ing diligently digested Aristotle’s
 “ Poetics, would be as absurd, and
 “ impossible, as to pretend to a skill
 “ in geometry without having stu-
 “ died Euclid.” This remark most
 palpably characterizes the cold, elab-
 orate, and absurd pedant. Ignorant,
 or artful sophists are apt to support a
 I favourite

favourite theory by making lively, but impertinent allusions, by sporting brilliant antitheses, and by forcing into their service arbitrary and unnatural analogies. Meretricious and contemptible tricks! which, however, confound, or seduce, and conquer superficial minds. It seems to me as ridiculous to recommend any poetical object by a reference to Euclid, as it would be to demonstrate the properties of scarlet, by an appeal to those of the sound of a cannon. The nature, and effects of geometry and poetry are totally heterogeneous, and incompatible; they are produced by applications essentially

tially different, of the senses, and of thought. An Aristotle, and a War-
 ton may retort a supercilious, ma-
 gisterial smile; but a Longinus, and
 a Harris may honour me with a look
 of animated approbation, when I
 assert that the geometrician and the
 poet form two different species in
 the human genus. The mind of the
 mere mathematician is frigid, and
 barren; destitute of passion, and
 imagination; he is endowed with
 perception enough to acknowledge
 a self-evident, and meagre truth;
 with patience enough to follow a
 long series of such truths; with dry,
 and local memory enough to retain
 that

that series ; and with reason enough to allow its indisputable consequence. The mind of the poet is ardent, and luxuriant ; it pervades, with a rapid flight, the fertile, and exhaustless regions of fancy ; the images which it forms with emotion, with enthusiasm, inspire those who can adopt them with a flame congenial with its own. The objects of the poet are, the works of nature, as in their immediate effects, they impress the mind of man ;—the various passions of the human breast ;—our various relations, dispositions, and characters, as we are affected by religion, government, solitude, and society.

society. With these objects mankind are daily conversant ; and with these objects the poet addresses his readers, for their noble entertainment, and instruction, in matter, and language as perspicuous as common sense ; with the interesting advantages of a vigorous, and elegant style, of harmonious versification ; of description, sentiment, and sublimity.

In reading a true Poem, we need not investigate the sense of its Author ; but investigation is the slow pace in which the mathematical student must always proceed. If a passage in a poet seems obscure ; if it puts the *understanding* on exertion ;

M

either

either that passage must not be Poetry (for Poetry must be perspicuous; its effects must be striking, and instantaneous) or the soul of the reader must be torpid, and impassive; it must have been intended by nature for mathematicks. He who is endowed with good sense, and sentiment, who has had no regular education, but is conversant with the English language, and with the world, though he has never before opened a Poet, will receive great pleasure from reading Pope's *Eloïsa* to *Abelard*, or even his *Essay on Man*. But would not *He*, or almost any other person, find the *Elements*

of Euclid, even after he had conquered many propositions, dry, difficult, and disgusting? The sensible, and the unprejudiced will, without hesitation, answer in the affirmative. And why would He be thus differently affected by these two Authors?—Because the genius of Pope is employed on those objects which actuate our being; on those objects in which we are deeply, and constantly interested; which debase, and dignify, which torment and delight us.—But the objects which are presented to us by Euclid, are jejune, and severe; far distant from those ideas which diversify, and embellish

life; and only reached by a slow journey through an arduous, and dreary road. His principles, in the course of many ages, were partly discovered by chance, and partly multiplied, and improved by human industry. They are the foundations of an art merely intellectual; of gradual, and complicated science.

I dare say Dr. Warton will allow that Homer, the oldest European poet, is the greatest. Thus one man brought epic Poetry, the noblest province of the Muse, to perfection, in a barbarous age, by the mere force, and exertion of his genius. But Homer could not have read
Aristotle's

Aristotle's Poetics; for He lived long before that philosopher. Nay we know that the epic rules in this poetical Code, without which, it seems, we cannot be qualified either to write, or to read Poetry, were fabricated from the plan, from the beautiful, and from the sublime of Homer. Thus an ardent, a comprehensive, a self-taught genius, dictated, and circumscribed the laws of the Stagyræite: the poet was not modelled by the critick, but the critick by the poet. And that the Poems of Homer were thoroughly felt, and admired before the days of Aristotle; that they have had the same general

influence in later times ; and on many who never saw the Poetics of Aristotle ; and that many excellent Poems have been written, whose Authours never looked into that work, I suppose Dr. Warton will not be hardy enough to deny. I might, in this passage, have adopted the Doctor's phrase of *understanding Poetry* ; had I not thought it only worthy of a *geometrical critick* ; had I not thought that no torture of the English language could produce a more incoherent expression.

From these arguments, the liberal reader, I hope, will infer, that geometry, and all the other sciences are
attained,

attained, but that Poetry is inspired ; that the poet owes his essential powers, and fame, to his own vigorous, rich, and extensive genius ; that this rare constitution of mind supersedes all schools, and universities ; that it cannot be produced by the sun-shine, nor depressed by the rigour of fortune ; that it may be considerably improved, and adorned ; but, as it's characteristicks are sagacity, and fire, that it must not derive it's cultivation, and embellishment from cold, formal rules, and systems ; from the great Aristotle, or from the little Warton ; but from instructors nobler, and more deci-

five;—from a frequent attention to the works of nature; an attention sometimes accurate, and minute, sometimes enthusiastick, and unbounded; from it's own sufferings, and enjoyments; from an intimate acquaintance with the human mind; from a masterly knowledge of polite literature; but, above all, from holding high converse with the greatest poets; by catching harmony from their numbers, taste, and elegance from their descriptions; tenderness, and magnanimity from their sentiments.

It is in the power of any man to be a good mathematician: for to ex-
cell

cell in mathematicks, common sense, close application, and perseverance are only requisite. But men of capital talents, who have had all the advantages of education, whose minds are collected, and habituated to literary discipline, sometimes mistake their strength, entertain poetical ambition without poetical genius, and after many strenuous efforts, are never able to rise above correct, and unassuming mediocrity. While the great, but unfortunate few, whom nature inspires, and on whom nature seems to have entailed calamity, conquer every opposition to excellence, and to fame; surmount the languor

languor of sickness, the pressure of poverty, the polite insolence of patronage; and

————— inform the page
 With diction, musick, sentiment, and
 thought,
 Never to die! ————— THOMSON.

It is not a little surprizing that great *Orators* have in vain attempted to be *Poets*. For when we survey the mental properties of *Each*, They seem so nearly related, that if experience was not indisputable, we should suppose that They might easily coalesce, and flourish in the same person. But I believe it will
 be

be found, in the History of mankind, that They are

For ever separate, though for ever near.

So inscrutable are the natural principles, and the operations of the human mind.

“ Pope (says Dr. Warton, p. 310.)
 “ has added [to the original sentiments of Eloïsa] a very injudicious
 “ thought ;

The jealous God, when we profane his
 fires,

Those restless passions in revenge inspires—

“ and again,

Love, free as air, at sight of human ties,
 Spreads his light wings, and in a moment
 flies.—

“ If

“ It is improper for a person *in the*
 “ *situation* of Eloïsa to mention
 “ Cupid : Mythology is here out of
 “ it’s place.”

Will the man who deliberately makes this remark, pretend that He is acquainted with Poetry, and passion ? Was not Eloïsa struggling between Duty, and Abelard who was dearer to Her than Duty ; between Religion, and Love ? And as She was well versed in the Heathen Mythology, was it not natural, extremely natural, for one in *her situation*, to make incongruous transitions from venerable Saints to the gay Deities who presided over pleasure ; from
 the

the Crucifix to Cupid? Consistently with the criticism I have now quoted, the Doctor might have gravely told us that a Nun ought not to have been in Love; and that so unnatural an object as Eloïsa was not a proper theme for the genius of a poet. Indeed, such wretched cavil is too contemptible for animadversion.

After having payed no artificial respect to an impertinent, and presumptuous writer, who had the confidence to attack the sacred reputation of Pope, I shall recommend his Book to learned and polite readers, for the merit which was annexed to

Perrault's

Perrault's Blasphemies against Homer ;—for the sake of it's anecdotes, and quotations.

Of Mr. Pope I may venture to observe, that though his writings are not so strongly, and boldly characterized with originality, and invention as those of Shakespeare, and Milton, yet if we recollect that our miraculous Boy, at the age of fourteen, gave to English Poetry, a strength, elegance, and harmony, which were unknown before ; if we consider how eloquent he is, and with what ease ; how correct, and elegant, and with what spirit, and fire ; we may pronounce Him as
rare

rare a phænomenon as either of those two unrivalled poets.

It may be thought that I have too copiously answered some absurd propositions: but I flatter myself that my answers are fraught with truths that will prove agreeable, and interesting to liberal, and sentimental minds. I have been thus explicit, and full, in refuting the dogmas of an academical chair; not from a false opinion of their importance; nor from an ungenerous contempt of science, which produces useful, salutary, and noble effects; but from juster, and more ingenuous motives: from a jealousy for the glory of an
immortal

immortal poet; from my admiration of the divine art; and from an ardour to vindicate the laws of nature from the laws of Aristotle. *Taste*, and *Reason*, even in *this* enlightened age, are persecuted, and shackled, not by one or two, but by many criticks, who are very learned, but very poorly qualified to be the arbiters of *Either*. * The fascination

* J'ouvre un livre moderne. Son impression sur moi est plus agréable que celle d'un ouvrage ancien. Je ne lis même le dernier qu'avec dégoût: n'importe; c'est l'ancien que je louerai de préférence. Pourquoi? c'est que les Hommes, et leurs generations sont les echos les uns des autres; c'est qu'on estime sur parole jusqu'à l'ouvrage qui nous ennuie.

L'envie,

scination of Greek and Latin is yet unbroken; and every impartial scholar deserves encouragement from the Republick of Letters, who endeavours to dissolve the spell. The bright, and genial rays of philosophy have banished religious gloom; but our literature is yet deformed with monastick prejudices. Hence the writer who is so injudicious; who is actuated by an ambition so erroneous as

L'envie, d'ailleurs, défend d'admirer un contemporain; et l'envie prononce, presque toujours, tous nos jugemens. Pour humilier les vivants que d'eloges prodigués aux morts!

Helvetius:—De L'Homme.

N

to

to compose a * tedious Epic Poem, must model it from the plans of Homer, and Virgil ; it must have it's

* The Epic Poems of Homer, and Virgil are excellently written : but they are as much admired from custom, as from sentiment. Whoever extends a Poem to a very great length, is, in that respect, injudicious : he is inattentive to the bounds by which Nature hath limited our powers of enjoyment. We cannot be warmly interested in all the diffusion of a subject which is animated, and embellished by the Muse through many thousand lines. Pleasure in pursuing a subject thus elevated and adorned, is too high to be durable. The judgement of Poets, as of Those who are conversant with the other fine arts, is, or ought to be improved, in a course of ages. Homer, and Virgil will always be universally, and attentively read : their glory is ensured by the sanction of two, and three thousand years. But whoever hereafter writes an Epick Poem, if He gains many readers at first, will not keep the number long.

Catalogue,

Catalogue, it's Epifodes, it's Descent into Hell, in certain dispositions, and of certain characters; or it must be destitute of Poetry. Our insensible dictators pay no regard to what passes in life; to what gives genuine pleasure: They allow no play to the beautiful, and great expansions of nature. Hence the double plot in the celebrated Tragedy of Cato is austerey condemned; though the Love-plot preserves the play from flatness, and brings no confusion, nor obscurity into it's Fable, or Dialogue. Hence the old, impertinent Chorus is obtruded on our stage by some little scholastick poets: and

hence Dr. Hurd, that modern aristarchus, without *his* fire, so childishly doats on his dramatic unities, that he prefers the Step-mother of Terence to his other Plays, and pronounces it exquisitely beautiful: a Comedy, which, if it deserves that name, was, with great justice, very languidly received by ancient Rome. It is evidently the worst production of that elegant Authour; it's Fable is uninteresting; it's Characters are faintly distinguished; and it is loaded with long, unnatural soliloquy. Such are the rules, and systems, inculcated by mechanical erudition, and echoed by imitative superficiality.

*An INVOCATION to the SHADE
of POPE.*

“ AS there have been more im-
 “ probable Doctrines concerning
 “ the invisible world, than to sup-
 “ pose that Thou, O amiable, il-
 “ lustrious, and beatified Shade, art
 “ sometimes a witness to the lan-
 “ guage of a solitary, but active,
 “ and sentimental mind;—that Thou
 “ sometimes whisperest virtue, and
 “ happiness to mortals;—deign to
 “ view this effort of my zeal for
 “ thy poetick fame (to which Thou
 “ art perhaps indifferent in thy pre-
 “ sent state) with a propitious eye.

“ And

“ And if, with thy intuitive penetra-
 “ tion, Thou see’st my want of power
 “ to do Thee justice, accept the
 “ gratitude, and ardour of my will.

“ Let me thank Thee for the con-
 “ solation, for the pleasure, with
 “ which thy Muse hath alleviated,
 “ and brightened, my fluctuating, and
 “ adverse life. In my hours of poe-
 “ tical solitude (if, indeed, it is not
 “ pusillanimous to say that I was in
 “ solitude, while I conversed with *thy*
 “ moral, and mellifluous numbers)
 “ Thou hast made me impassive to
 “ the gloom of external objects;
 “ Thou hast made me independent
 “ of the gay companions of pro-
 “ sperity,

“ sperity, and of the favour of the
 “ Great. While I caught strong
 “ inspiration from *Thee*, I have tri-
 “ umphed in my nature: I have
 “ felt, beyond a possibility of doubt,
 “ that I was superiour to accident,
 “ and to matter; that I was born to
 “ exist, and to be happy, in a better
 “ world.

“ May the benevolent, the plato-
 “ nick Virtue, who in *thy* strains, is
 “ so eloquent, and attractive, win me
 “ to the constant love of *Her*, and
 “ teach me to moderate my inferiour
 “ passions. Those obliquities, which,
 “ neither by my own endeavours,
 “ nor by thy influence, I shall be able

“ to rectify, will be viewed, by
 “ Beings who are raised above all
 “ earthly ignorance, and envy, with
 “ an eye of generous compassion :
 “ and I hope they will be pardoned
 “ by OUR COMMON FATHER. May
 “ I never relinquish any good
 “ quality with which I am en-
 “ dowed ! May I conquer the evils
 “ which yet await me ;—may I re-
 “ tain my contempt of wealth, and
 “ grandeur, by the force, and splen-
 “ dour of poetical creation. For
 “ the colours of *thy* Muse are more
 “ glorious than oriental lustre ; and
 “ as I know that I am above *low*
 “ *ambition, and the pride of Kings,*
 “ I would

“ I would rather wish to possess *thy*
 “ abilities, than the power of a
 “ monarch.

“ When the last hour of my
 “ existence in *this* world approaches,
 “ may my parting soul be cheered
 “ with the celestial forms that
 “ charmed thy enraptured eye, and
 “ breathed serenity, and fragrance
 “ on thy evening-walks, along the
 “ banks of thy Thames, or in the
 “ groves of thy Windsor! May
 “ They bid langour smile, and
 “ smoothe the bed of death! For
 “ they have been my powerful auxi-
 “ liaries, when I was assailed by ob-
 “ jects more terrible than the grave.

O

“ May

“ May they embolden me to antici-
 “ pate life eternal; to maintain a
 “ strong, yet a humble hope, that
 “ I shall obtain that mercy, and
 “ happiness, which were denied me
 “ in *this* unequal state, from THE
 “ FIRST GOOD, FIRST PERFECT, AND
 “ FIRST FAIR !”

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